

# **School Evaluation Report**

**John Marshall Community High School**

**10101, East 38<sup>th</sup> Street  
Indianapolis  
Indiana  
46235**

**Principal: Michael Sullivan**

**Dates of evaluation: May 16 -17, 2011**

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## **Part 1: The School Context**

Background information about the school

## **Part 2: Overview**

The improvements that the school has made

The improvements that are still required

## **Part 3: Main findings**

**The impact of the money invested in the first year of the SIG program on the quality of education provided and the achievement of the students.**

**The current effectiveness of schools in the four key domains:**

- 1. Governance Structure**
- 2. Data and Instruction**
- 3. Increased Learning Time and Professional Development**
- 4. Socio-emotional and Community Oriented Services**

## Part 1: The School Context

### Information about the school:

John Marshall Community High School has an enrolment of 601 students, covering grade 6 through grade 10. The school population comprises 10 percent Hispanic, 82 percent African American, 6 percent White and 2 percent Asian students. Ten point six percent of students are designated as English language learners. Thirty four percent of the students are identified as special education students. All students who attend the school are deemed to be 100 percent at risk. The attendance rate to date in 2010–2011 is 92 percent. All students are Title 1 eligible.

The current principal was appointed in July 2009. He is an experienced administrator. The principal was involved in writing the current School Improvement Grant (SIG). During his tenure, the principal has established a new administrative team and all staff have been appointed over the last eighteen months. The intervention model that was selected for the school was the 'TurnaroundI model'. The turnaround partner chosen to support the school was 'SchoolWorks' (SW). The turnaround process focused on four major themes; Establishing a new Governance Structure, Use of Data to Inform and Differentiate Instruction, Implementation of Strategies to Create Increased Learning Time, Student Support. The school was previously a middle school, but is now growiing annually to become a high school. This position will be achieved in the next academic year.

Available data demonstrate the school is making positive progress in standardized tests

- From 2009 to 2010, Grade 7 experienced an 11.6 percent increase in the proportion of students passing both Math and English/Language Arts.
- From 2009 to 2010, Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 students experienced an increase in average English/Language Arts scores, while only Grade 7 and Grade 8 students experienced an increase in average Math scores. .
- From 2009 to 2010, the percentage of Grades 6-8 students passing the English/Language Arts portion of the ISTEP+ test increased 8.4 percent, with 29 percent of students passing.
- In Spring 2010. From 2009 to 2010, the percentage of Grades 6-8 students passing the Math portion of the ISTEP+ test increased 13.4 percent, with 36 percent of students passing in Spring 2010.

## Part 2: Overview

### The areas of the school that have been improved:

- The District has used the change in personnel regulations to select a new principal and staff which has had a significant impact on beginning to raise student achievement,
- The principal has introduced clear policies, processes and practices which have brought order and purpose to the school.
- Student behavior and attitudes to work have dramatically improved.
- The principal has a high profile in the school which is welcomed by parents and the wider school community.
- Data demonstrate the school is making progress since the allocation of the School Improvement Grant (SIG).
- The Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have benefitted staff understanding of issues, increased the effectiveness of communication and brought a collegiate approach to school development.
- The extended day has provided opportunities for students to address deficits in their learning.
- The District has reduced the level of bureaucracy and attendance at meetings to enable the principal to focus on improving the school.
- The school has used available funding to attract and retain teachers through use of annual bonuses.
- The school is data rich and has the information to identify clearly what each student understands, knows and can and cannot do.
- Professional development opportunities are plentiful and release time provided by cadre teachers is available for teachers to engage in them.
- Classroom observations carried out by the principal enable him to know the qualities and development areas of all staff.
- The Grade 9 Graduation Coach has been effective in informing students and parents of the credit accumulation process and what is required to graduate.
- The introduction of electronic notebooks has been a valuable resource to enable students to organize their work schedule and become more responsible for their own learning.
- Parents have a great appreciation of the positive improvement in the school climate and culture.
- The school is developing several partnerships with business partners to enrich the opportunities available to students and to support the wider community,

## The areas of the school that remain to be improved:

- The school development partner appointed by the District has not been effective in providing for and addressing the specific needs of the school. This has had an adverse impact on the pace of progress made by the school.
- The District has provided too many initiatives that are generic to improvement rather than evaluating the needs of the school and allowing the principal the autonomy to select the support mechanisms he believes are most effective.
- The school has not placed sufficient personnel with proven expertise in key roles to lead the school forward.
- The school does not have an effective leadership team and is therefore too reliant on the principal for driving the school forward.
- The school does not have a strategic school improvement plan to provide direction or to measure progress against.
- The principal does have a mentor but they are not sufficiently effective in acting as a confidant, supporter and critical friend.
- The role of the school turnaround officer is currently under developed.
- The school has not evaluated the impact of the Instructional Leadership Team or clearly defined its purpose and will need to do so if it is to be retained.
- Insufficient use is made of data at whole school and classroom level for it to have the required impact on student performance.
- The analysis of data is insufficient at all levels.
- The support provided by data coaches is having little impact on school development.
- There is insufficient evaluation of current initiatives by the school and turnaround partner for their impact to be measured.
- The needs of higher achieving students are not met because there is a lack of challenge in many lessons.
- There is no coherent, planned professional development program to address the needs of all staff.
- Staff does not have a bespoke professional development program with individual targets that emanate from classroom observations.
- The principal has not evaluated the impact of his regular but brief classroom observations.
- There is insufficient support available to students to prepare them for college.

## Part 3: Main Findings

**Overall Evaluation:** The school's overall performance and the extent to which the SIG funding has resulted in significant improvement:

### **This school has made satisfactory improvement.**

The principal has made a sound start in turning the school around but progress made in areas identified in the SIG is variable. The initial focus was to introduce protocols and practices to bring order to the school. These are now in place and effective. The work carried out by the principal to improve student conduct has been very successful. Behavior during transition and in classrooms is much improved. This has created a positive learning environment. The principal has used the facility available to him to select his own teaching staff. This has had a positive effect on student learning. While many staff members lack experience, they are generally committed to the development of the school and are keen to learn. This is reflected in the significant improvement in student achievement.

The turnaround partner allocated to the school has made insufficient impact on quality and standards. Their approach has been formulaic and has not taken sufficient account of the particular needs of the school. The strategies suggested for improvement are having insufficient impact for meaningful progress to occur. Neither have they been evaluated. This has resulted in a lack of cohesion in the development process. The principal has yet to articulate his vision so it is fully understood by the school community. Neither has the school developed a strategic plan which clearly outlines the planned developments of the school. Therefore the development program lacks cohesion and its impact is consequently lessened.

The school is rich with data which clearly illustrates the achievement and progress of each student. However, its understanding and use to inform planning both at whole school and classroom level is underdeveloped. At best it is used as a deficit model to identify students who underperform in scrimmages and benchmark tests. On these occasions support is timely for students who attend the extended day classes. Teachers rarely use the information they receive to differentiate instruction. This results in the curriculum being delivered according to the newly instituted instructional program rather than focused on student learning needs.

The plethora of initiatives and attendant professional development that has been imposed on the school detracts from the long-term impact. Classroom observations provide valuable information relating to the skills and abilities of teachers. Insufficient use is made of this to target bespoke training to address teacher need. The PLC's provide valuable and valued opportunities for staff to plan assess and discuss school issues. This has resulted in a positive collegiate approach to issues which have brought this new staff close together in a short period of time. The school has implemented an extended day which does much to meet the needs of those students who have deficits in their current learning. However, it does not address the wider needs of all students and therefore its potential as a vehicle for extended learning is not utilized effectively.

Parents speak highly of the improvements to the school and welcome the information they receive. However parents comment that they would like increased opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the school so their views can be expressed. Students consider they are not fully prepared or supported in

terms of college readiness. However they state that they are fully aware of the credits they require for graduation. Students similarly recognize the improvements taking place in the school and the increased opportunities and attention they are receiving. The school is beginning to develop positive relationships with community partners to increase and enrich experiences available to students.

### ***Governance Structure***

The principal has been extremely effective in bringing order and discipline to the school. He inherited a situation where there were few policies, processes, and practices in place. Therefore, the student population was volatile in terms of behavior and attitudes to staff. Non-negotiable protocols have been introduced over time and student behavior has improved dramatically both in classrooms and during transition. Students are quite clear of what is expected and the consequences that ensue should they break the rules. Sanctions are applied fairly and with consistency. The principal has a high profile in the school. He engages with students who in turn welcome the attention they receive. Therefore he provides a good role model for the student population. The majority of staff members do not have the same impact with students. The principal has been working with staff to improve their engagement with students and provide better role models. Support in managing student behavior has been delivered by a behavior management specialist. The impact has been varied. The principal is the dominant force in implementing and transmitting successful strategies.

The lead turnaround partner, ScoolWorks (SW), has established three goals for the school. The goals are too vague as are the plans to achieve them. Action plans lack rigor as an effective tool to drive the school forward. However, SW does provide regular monthly support which is welcomed by the teachers who receive it. Results of lesson observations indicate a significant increase in student engagement. Enhanced student performance in testing bears this out. An Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) has been established on the advice of SW. They meet on a weekly basis to discuss issues and methods to address them. However, there is no coherent strategic plan to guide and direct their deliberations. This results in an ad hoc or reactive approach to school development. The ILT is keen, enthusiastic but inexperienced. Their ability to be effective is dissipated because many teachers lack experience. Progress is subsequently limited. SW sets the agenda for development with the principal, but has not evaluated the impact of their initiatives. Therefore, they have little basis on which to plan for the future.

The District has put in place systems to enable the principal to circumvent meetings and bureaucratic obstacles to enable him to focus on the development of the school. It is crucial for his effectiveness in turning the school around that the District continues to recognize the importance of their contribution and continues to deflect irrelevancies. The newly appointed turn around officer has a central role to play in supporting the school and needs to assume this mantle as advocate and critical friend. A mentor is in place to assist the principal but the impact in terms of providing critical support and direction for him is too limited to be an effective force for improvement. Therefore the principal remains responsible for driving the school forward without sufficient support structures.

The principal has been able to appoint 41 staff during the current academic year. The majority of whom will be retained. Judicious use of financial incentives has ensured that the school has been able to attract and retain teachers. However, there are insufficient people with proven experience in key positions. This absence is putting increased pressure on the principal in terms of his need to engage in a wide variety of roles. This is significantly hampering the progress the school is making.

The principal has a vision for the school but this is not always articulated effectively and shared with the school community. Therefore while there is recognition of progress made there is less certainty of the destination they are aiming for. The lack of an effective leadership team has resulted in the absence of

a coherent strategic plan to enable that vision to be realized. The school is well aware of the areas to be addressed but lacks a coherent structure to direct their efforts and against which to measure progress. It is essential that there is a strategic plan in place before the principal rewrites the SIG bid. This will enable the finance and support structures requested to underpin and facilitate the key components of the plan

## **Recommendations**

- *The school should develop a strategic plan to provide direction for the school.*
- *The plan should:*
  - *Contain the key activities identified to enable progress to occur*
  - *It should identify the person(s) who will lead, be responsible and accountable for its success.*
  - *It should be time lined with clear staging points against which performance and progress can be evaluated.*
  - *It should contain success criteria that reflect impact on student performance and school progress.*
- *The principal should appoint personnel in key positions to create a leadership team that is the corporate driving force of the school.*
- *The rewritten SIG bid should allow for new appointments and incorporate the support structures that will enable the strategic plan to be implemented effectively.*
- *The principal should focus on his leadership role, delegate responsibilities to key personnel, hold them to account for progress made and become less involved in operational management.*
- *The principal should have a mentor who has the interpersonal skills and qualities to enable them to act as confidant, supporter and critical friend.*
- *Evaluate the impact of the ILT and revise its role to ensure it has a positive impact on the development of the school.*
- *The District should seriously question the effectiveness of their appointed turn around partner in identifying the key improvement needs of the school and the structures they have advised to achieve them.*
- *The District should continue to ensure that the principal has increased autonomy to effect developments in the school. It is important that the District facilitates progress and takes a broader view of what is required for success.*
- *The principal should have increased autonomy to make decisions and introduce initiatives that are specific to raising student achievement and staff competencies.*

## **Data and Instruction**

The school is data rich. The data coaches collect and present a range of data in the Data Suite. However, little progress has been made on using this information as a tool to inform instruction. Ongoing assessment data provides valuable information on students but insufficient analysis is undertaken at whole school, grade and class level to maximize its potential. The school has tri-weekly “scrimmage” or benchmark tests for Language Arts and bi-weekly scrimmage tests for Mathematics. The results of these tests are distributed regularly but not analyzed for trends. Neither are they disaggregated by the data coaches to provide an informed view of the performance of groups of



students. Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT's) and the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) review the data to identify low performing students. They are subsequently supported through the Extended Learning Day Program (ELDP). However, there are no interventions to extend the more able students. In addition to the Data Suite, each student has a card with his/her standardized test results. The lack of a consistent and coherent strategy to utilize this wealth of data is limiting the achievement of all students. The data coaches have access to the data and are working individually with teachers (and in the PLCs) on analyzing their scrimmage scores. However, the 9 week benchmark tests are not being reviewed and analyzed to the extent needed to make instructional changes. This adversely affects test scores.

Staff members are not sufficiently adept at analyzing data to inform instruction. While there are pockets of teachers who are beginning to develop their ability to understand and use data this is the exception rather than the rule. Instruction does not account for individual student differences and is not differentiated to meet student need. This results in teachers delivering a set curriculum instead of building on prior student knowledge, skills and understanding. Consequently low achievers become confused and the more able students are not sufficiently challenged. The school is attempting to address this through co-teaching professional development training. However, this development is embryonic. Therefore, many teachers lack the expertise to institute true, systematic change in instructional methodologies. The differentiated accountability coach has had insufficient influence to provide professional development that impact on teacher instruction or data competence.

The data coach has not analyzed the effectiveness of the school's key intervention programs (Reading Apprenticeship, Achieve 3000, Fast Forward, Notebooks and Plato). There is currently no data to suggest that these programs are making a difference to student achievement. Interviews indicate this analysis will be conducted in the summer of 2011. The lack of evaluation procedures results in the school's continued use of programs that have not been evaluated for effectiveness.

### **Recommendations:**

- *Ensure data coaches have the ability to analyze and disaggregate data and suggest specific changes in instructional strategies as a result of their analyses.*
- *Ensure that all staff members fully understand the purpose and use of data.*
- *Ensure data are disaggregated and drive the school's school improvement plan.*
- *Ensure all teachers receive pertinent professional development related to differentiated instruction so it becomes embedded in their daily practice.*
- *Ensure there is a synergy between the demands of the instructional program and the learning needs of the students.*
- *Institute a formalized process for reviewing individual scores with the teachers, parents, and students.*
- *Evaluate the impact of current initiatives, decide which are appropriate as a force for improvement and reject those that are not.*
- *Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of data coaches.*

### **Increased Learning Time and Professional Development**

In conjunction with SW the school realigned its schedule to create a 9 period day and the opportunity for teachers to meet as subject specific PLCs. The 9 period day has created additional voluntary instruction time for students in need of extra support. Data identify students who have underperformed.

Students report that they find this time beneficial. The supplementary instruction delivered to small groups enables students to develop and reinforce prior learning. This is a remedial session and able students do not have the same opportunity to take advantage of the additional time. Therefore their needs are not fully met.

Teachers report that they find their daily, activity scheduled PLC sessions effective in developing their knowledge and skills. They are able to discuss teaching strategies, learn from each other and receive timely information about school developments. Therefore these sessions serve a dual purpose in both information delivery and professional enhancement through focused discussion. Staff also asserts that this has established a unity of purpose and the development of a collegiate approach to decision making.

The school has been the recipient of many initiatives. These have been allocated to them rather than chosen by them. Therefore, they are not a part of a planned program targeted at identified need. There is a profusion of professional development but it is not coordinated in a coherent way or matched to individual need. This lack of focus results in teachers experiencing much but little becomes embedded in their practice. Teachers understand this and expressed the view that often less is more. The principal has been thorough in his formal evaluations of teaching. He therefore has an understanding of the strengths and development areas of all staff. In addition the principal engages in regular 'five minute' walk-throughs and provides verbal or electronic feedback to teachers on his observations. This activity is time heavy. The principal has not evaluated its impact on teachers practice but it does monitor and encourage compliance. None of these observations result in individual professional development programs. Therefore the opportunity to establish on-going, job-embedded professional development does not occur sufficiently to impact positively on teacher's instruction. This significantly hampers their ability to learn.

The current system of extending learning time for students is limited to those experiencing problems. This is a useful way of addressing deficits for a few. However because the current system has a limited target group many students do not benefit from this additional resource. Therefore opportunities to extend learning, enrich the curriculum and increase provision for credit recovery are under-utilized. The SIG is vague in this area and it provides no firm direction in terms of compliance with the grant or whether student access to additional time is advisory or compulsory.

## **Recommendations**

- *The District should allow the principal more autonomy to identify the initiatives that the school would benefit from rather than being prescriptive about what the school needs.*
- *The principal should evaluate the impact of current initiatives on teacher practice and student learning and make decisions about their relevancy.*
- *Classroom observations should support the development of individual professional development programs for each teacher and provide support so that goals can be met.*
- *The principal should consider whether brief, daily classroom observation is improving practice sufficiently to warrant the time spent on this exercise.*
- *The principal and staff should clearly identify the purpose and outcomes of PLC meetings and add more rigor to their content. This is an extremely high investment of time and money. Therefore their impact should be closely monitored and evaluated for impact on staff/student performance.*
- *The school should consider the best way to utilize the extended day to maximize its potential and impact on the learning of all students.*

## ***Socio-emotional and Community Oriented Services***

The parents report that they have seen positive school changes over the past year. They feel more welcome in the school. Parents have appreciated the additional efforts of the principal to encourage parent involvement such as a Parent Breakfast, a Saturday Boot Camp for Women and a 'walk-a-thon' to raise awareness of the importance of community in their child's education. Parents report a notable change in the school climate stating that the school is cleaner, safer, and teachers and administrators are more caring. Additionally, they applauded the administration for improved communication efforts such as calling them when their child is absent. They specifically commented on the increased visibility of the principal and how he has instituted rules and policies which bring a sense of order to the school. This reflects the positive culture that is a prevalent and developing feature of the school.

There is no formal way for parents to provide feedback to the school, thus limiting their input on issues and suggestions for improvement. Parents would like to receive a hard copy survey each year so they can provide specific, confidential feedback to the school. Parents also believe that their children are not engaging in homework assignments on a regular basis. They stated they are kept aware when their child is failing or not performing well but do not recall actually seeing standardized test results. They were not aware that each student should have a card posting all of their test results. Therefore while communication has improved significantly it tends to be a one way process which limits the opportunity of the school to gather valuable information which would inform its direction.

The Grade 9 graduation coach has made a significant impact since her appointment. Dialogue has taken place with all parents and students. Therefore they are well aware of the requirements for graduation and the remaining credits they have to accumulate for success. Students speak highly of the attention they receive and the phone calls that ensue should they be absent. They find the notebooks a positive addition to their development because they support credit recovery out of normal school hours. Students are therefore becoming more accountable for planning their own learning. However, students are less confident that they receive sufficient guidance in preparing for further education, specifically college readiness. Students and parents were also unsure about the role and availability of the guidance counselor. This prevented access to support on occasion. A general theme from students was that they wanted and deserved the same opportunities that other students their age received. However, they were enthusiastic about recent improvements and the reintroduction of the 'prom' they had just attended.

The school is developing positive relationships with Community Partners, notably Wal Mart who provide a school-based clothes store and food, and is becoming a workforce partner. This is beginning to address the poverty factor that several of the students experience. The principal values the internships, even though they are limited in number.

### **Recommendations:**

- *Develop, disseminate, and analyze parent feedback and make appropriate changes based on the information received.*
- *Ensure teachers and students are sharing individual student's scores with parents or guardians.*
- *Create a homework policy and ensure teachers regularly assign homework.*
- *Increase visibility and communication efforts of the school guidance counselors.*
- *Continue to develop partnerships in the community.*
- *Increase student access to internships and general experience of the wider world.*
- *Implement a college ready program so all students receive pertinent advice and support.*